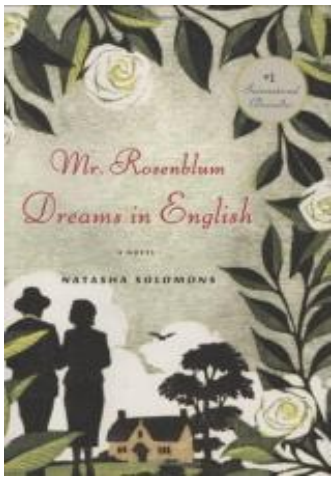
Mr. Rosenblum Dreams in English

by Natasha Solomons



About the Book

At the outset of World War II, Jack Rosenblum, his wife Sadie, and their baby daughter escape Berlin, bound for London. They are greeted with a pamphlet instructing immigrants how to act like "the English." Jack acquires Saville Row suits and a Jaguar. He buys his marmalade from Fortnum & Mason and learns to list the entire British monarchy back to 913 A.D. He never speaks German, apart from the occasional curse. But the one key item that would make him feel fully British -membership in a golf club-remains elusive.

Discussion Guide

1. Mr. Rosenblum Dreams in English explores the real split between the need to adopt the host country?s customs while not losing one?s own heritage, and an ambivalence about wanting children to blend in but turning them into strangers in the process. Do you think these tensions can ever be reconciled?

2. Names are significant indicators of heritage in the novel and signify who belongs and who doesn?t. Do you think it is important to preserve what Jack calls the ?chain? of names?

3. Sadie observes that ?despite everything [Jack] was an outsider.? Is it ever possible to fully belong? Is it desirable?

4. Jack makes many mistakes in his attempts to access English culture. Do you think it is easier or harder for immigrants today to find a way into society? Could a Helpful Information booklet such as the one Jack uses ever be of any use? What items would you put on a modern list?

5. The novel mingles folklore and Jewish tradition. What do you think the woolly-pig symbolizes?

6. Sadie bakes obsessively to remember her family. Does this help her overcome her grief, or does it paralyze her

further? How do you think Sadie changes when her baking becomes less of a lonely task and something that she shares with her daughter and the village women?

7. Jack?s obsession leads him to neglect his wife, and their relationship is often strained and distant. Yet when he nearly loses her, he regrets his behavior and tries to make amends. Does Sadie forgive him? Can you?

8. Why does Curtis give Jack the recipe for Jitterbug cider? What makes Jack ?a true Englishman??

Author Bio

Natasha Solomons is the author of nine internationally bestselling novels, including MR ROSENBLUM'S LIST; THE NOVEL IN THE VIOLA, which was chosen for the Richard & Judy Book Club; and THE GALLERY OF VANISHED HUSBANDS. Natasha lives in Dorset with her son, her daughter and her husband, the children's author David Solomons, with whom she also writes screenplays. Her novels have been translated into 17 languages. When not writing in the studio, Natasha can usually be found in her garden.

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